

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 KHARTO 01932 101108Z

ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

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INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

S E C R E T KHARTOUM 1932

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM, PINT, PINS, SU

SUBJECT: SUDANGOV TO RELEASE HUNDEREDS OF POLITICAL PRISONERS

REF: KHARTOUM 1901

1. REFTEL REPORTED FATH ABD AL-RAHMAN BESHIR, SUDANESE BUSINESS LEADER WHO PLAYING KEY ROLE IN NIMEIRI- SADIQ AL-MAHDI NEGOTIATIONS, WAS PERMITTED MEET MUSLIM BROTHER LEADER HASSAN AL-TURABI. WE UNDERSTAND MEETING HAS NOW TAKEN PLACE, AND BESHIR BRIEFED TURABI ON RECENT DEVELOPMENTS. TURABI CLAIMED TO BE UNAWARE OF GESTURE TOWARD OPPOSITION CONTAINED IN NIMEIRI'S INAUGURATION SPEECH. HE SAID IN HIS 75 MONTHS IN PRISON HE HAS NOT READ NEWSPAPERS NOR LISTENED TO RADIO; HE ONLY READS KORAN. NEVERTHELESS BESHIR APPARENTLY WAS SUCCESSFUL IN GETTING TURABI AT LEAST TO CONSIDER DROPPING ACTIVE OPPOSITION TO NIMEIRI REGIME WHICH WOULD LEAD TO HIS RELEASE FROM PRISON.

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2. THIS WILL BE PART OF WHOLESALE RELEASE OF ASSORTED ANSARS, MUSLIM BROTHER AND OTHER OPPOSITION FIGURES WHO HAVE BEEN INCARCERATED FOR VARYING PERIODS WITHOUT TRIAL. NOT CLEAR EXACTLY HOW COMMUNIST WILL BE HANDLED, BUT THEY WILL BE SUBJECT TO CLOSER SCRUTINY. COMMUNISTS PROBABLY WILL BE RELEASED MORE SLOWLY AND WITH GREATER CAUTION THAN OTHERS.

3. DECISION TO MAKE MOVE WHILE NIMEIRI IN CHINA WAS MADE BY FIRST VP BAGHIR WHO CHAIRS NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL AND RANKS SECOND ONLY TO NIMEIRI IN GOVERNMENT. HE SUPPORTED BY MININT AND PRIME MINISTER. HOWEVER, SSU SECRETARY GENERAL ABUL GASSEM AND NO DOUBT OTHER SENIOR OFFICIALS OPPOSE MOVE WHICH THEY CONSIDER TO BE DANGEROUS TO STATE SECURITY. WE HAVE BEEN TOLD NIMEIRI AUTHORIZED BAGHIR TO MAKE SUCH DECISIONS WHILE HE WAS AWAY, BUT WE DO NOT RPT NOT KNOW WHETHER HE HAS SPECIFICALLY APPROVED GENERAL AMNESTY WHICH WILL INVOLVE SOME HUNDREDS OF PRISONERS.

4. COMMENT: WE THINK RELEASE OF PRISONERS, COMING ON HEELS NIMEIRI-SADIQ AL-MAHDI RAPPROCHEMENT LIKELY CAUSE STRAINS IN COUNTRY'S LEADERSHIP. IN GENERAL, OPPPOSITION ELEMENTS HAVE TRIED FORCEFULLY OVER THE YEARS TO REMOVE NIMEIRI, AND IT WILL NOT RPT NOT BE EASY FOR THOSE LIKE ABUL GASSEM TO FEEL MAGNANIMOUS TOWARD THEM. WHOLESALE RELEASE OF PRISONERS WILL FRIGHTEN THIS GROUP WHICH FEARS RENEWED ATTEMPTS AGAINST REGIME. HOWEVER, BAGHIR FACTION BELIEVES NIMEIRI IS OPERATING FROM STRENGTH. THEY CONSIDER THAT SUCH MOVES WILL BE POPULAR AND WILL SERVE TO UNDERCUT OPPOSITION. SPECIAL CARE WILL BE GIVEN TO PROBLEM OF COMMUNISTS. NIMEIRI HAS SAID PUBLICLY THAT WITHOUT INTERNAL CONSENSUS SUDAN CANNOT FACE FOREIGN THREAT. IN SHORT, DOMINANT FACTION APPARENTLY BELIEVES THAT ON BALANCE COUNTRY'S SECURITY CONCERNS WILL BE BETTER SERVED BY THESE ACTIONS, WHICH INTERESTINGLY ARE MIRRORED
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BY RECENT DECISIONS WHICH WILL LIBERALIZE ECONOMIC AFFAIRS AS WELL.

5. SOME ARE CLAIMING ACTION BEING TAKEN AT DIRECTION USG. THOUGH WE HAVE NOT SPECIFICALLY DISCUSSED POLITICAL PRESSURES, EMBASSY HAS BEEN STRESSING IMPORTANCE HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS IN OUR CONVERSATIONS WITH SUDANESE OFFICIALS. MOREOVER, INTEREST AND CONCERN OF CARTER ADMINISTRATION IN HUMAN RIGHTS WELL UNDERSTOOD HERE FROM PUBLIC STATEMENTS AND ACTIONS OF ADMINISTRATION. NIMEIRI AND HIS ADVISORS PROBABLY DO BELIEVE THAT RELEASE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS WILL BE LOOKED UPON FAVORABLY BY USG, PARTICULARLY WHEN COMPARED TO RECORD OF HIS PRINCIPAL ADVERSARIES, ETHIOPIA, LIBYA AND USSR.
BOGOSIAN

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Message Attributes

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